

Greetings,

The Custer Gallatin National Forest, Gardiner Ranger District, welcomes your comments on a proposal to convert the current Beattie Gulch and McConnell Fishing Access Areas temporary firearm discharge closures to permanent closures. The areas are located in the Gardiner Basin, north of Gardiner, Montana. Permanent closure to the discharge of firearms would continue addressing ongoing safety issues resulting from big game, including bison hunting. Bow hunting would still be allowed.

The McConnell Fishing Access area and the Beattie Gulch area are close to many developed facilities including State Highway 89, the Gardiner Airport, Old Yellowstone Trail, and private residences. This proximity makes it difficult, if not impossible to safely shoot a firearm of the caliber needed to harvest a bison or other big game animal, including bison.

The closures have been limited to the smallest area possible to address the ongoing safety concerns. About 23 acres out of approximately 24,500 acres, of National Forest System lands currently available for hunting big game in this area are affected. The Forest Service has been working closely with Park County, the state of Montana, and our local and tribal partners to address the human safety concerns resulting from shooting during the hunt.

The Forest Service is asking for public input on the proposal to convert the temporary closures to permanent closures. The proposal is being considered under the process outlined in the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act. To be most helpful, public input is requested beginning June 24, 2020 – August 22, 2020. Electronic comments can be submitted to [comments-northern-gallatin@usda.gov](mailto:comments-northern-gallatin@usda.gov). Written comments can be sent to Mike Thom, Gardiner District Ranger, 805 Scott St W, Gardiner, MT 59030. Additional information can also be found at [www.fs.usda.gov/main/custergallatin](http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/custergallatin) and at [www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/regulations-policies](http://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/regulations-policies).

Thank you for your interest.